

# PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AND EMPATHY RELATIONSHIP ACROSS INDIAN PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS.

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**Abstract:** In order to build relationships with people and behave humanely, empathy is necessary. A person in good psychological health feels good about themselves and has optimism for the future. Humanitarian aid workers, physicians, therapists, journalists, and also others whose professions require them as to be sensitive to the distress of others are examples of persons with empathy. On the other hand, they can eventually feel the suffering of those they help or document. Because of this "emotional residue," people could burn out, shut down, and become less willing or able to contribute. This suggests that there may be a connection between psychological health and empathy. Prior studies on the relationship between empathy and psychological health exclusively looked at nurses, doctors, and designers. Therefore, as primary school teachers are thought to be highly empathic by nature, the relationship between psychological well-being and empathy was the main focus of this current work. This research's findings demonstrated a positive relationship between teachers' psychological health and empathy, with greater psychological health being associated with higher levels of empathy. The study's findings also showed that there is no relationship between the age of primary school teachers and their level of empathy.

**Keywords:** Psychological health; Correlation coefficients, Empathy; Warwick- Edinberg Mental health Scale; Toronto Empathy Scale.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Taking care of pupils and developing close bonds with them is one of the most crucial facets of a teacher's work [1]. Giving students high levels of emotional support is another aspect of high-quality classrooms; this may be seen in the classroom's positive emotional tone, responsiveness to their academic, social, and emotional needs, and awareness of their interests [2]. To do this, you must have empathy, or the ability to read nonverbal clues from kids. For instance, when a teacher possesses cognitive empathy, it will be simpler for them to discern from a student's facial expressions whether the student is bored with a certain learning task, angry over a quarrel with friends, or upset over a bad grade.

Empathic teachers are aware that students can feel anxious about challenging assignments, or embarrassed and frustrated when they keep forgetting to provide the teacher the information they require. As soon as teachers recognise that their pupils are experiencing negative affective states, their affective empathy should prompt them to attend to their emotional needs in a sensitive manner, provide solace, and offer encouragement [3]. These ideas are also included in the prosocial classroom paradigm [4], which contends that teachers should be able to manage the classroom more easily because of their social-emotional competency, of which empathy is a part.

The current study question is whether there is a relationship between empathy and psychological or mental wellness. Therefore, the current study concentrated on determining the relationship between primary school teachers' psychological health and empathy. A brief summary of the literature's findings about the relationship between psychological well-being and empathy in various professions is provided in the section that follows.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Their overall well-being can relate to a group or an individual's social, spiritual, economic, medical, or psychological conditions. Although the majority of earlier research has defined psychological well-being as a being content with person's life and how people evaluate their own lives, the perfect concept of psychological well-being is very difficult to describe [5].

In a related study, Salami [6] stated as psychological health as a condition that occur from feeling happy with their own health, one's identity as a human-being, and one's relationships. "What people are notionally capable of doing and being, as well as what they actually been capable of doing and being" is what Gough et al. [7] define as wellbeing. A typical definition for psychological health is "the strive for perfection that reflects the realisation of one's full potential" [9], which is also significantly connected with empathy, according to research [8].

Additionally, definition of psychological health is closely correlated with empathy. The pursuit of perfection that represents reaching one's greatest potential is typically used to characterise psychological well-being [9, 10]. As per reference [10], there exists positive correlation among psychological health and empathy, both quality of life and mental health. Empathy total scores are negatively connected with emotional tiredness and job burnout, according to several studies [11, 12]. Workplace violence also significantly affects burnout levels at work by lowering empathy capacity. The research on relationship between psychological health and empathy of various professionals explored in the previous studies are nurses [13- 15], medical students [3, 16], social workers [17], psychotherapists [18].

Empathy, burnout, and attitudes towards the mental illness among Spanish mental health nurses were studied by Daniel Román-Sánchez et al. [15]. Their findings indicated a positive link between empathy and nearly every research measure; the only exceptions were the burnout personal accomplishment dimension and the socially restrictive and authoritarian views regarding mental illness dimensions, where negative correlation was observed.

Patricia Bourgault and colleagues' study investigated the relation between empathy and overall well-being of emergency nurses [19]. According to their investigation, nurses of emergency room seemed to have little empathy. Furthermore, the sample had low wellbeing and high degrees of psychological pain. Among the variables they took into consideration, they thought that empathy and wellbeing were related, and they found that nurses who were more well-off had higher empathy scores.

The mediating factors of psychological health and resilience in the link between medical students' empathy and professional aspirations were examined by Wenzhi Wu et al. [3]. Their results demonstrated that empathy influences medical students' expectations for their careers through the sequential mediating effects of psychological health and resilience. Babu et al. [20] pilot study on designers showed positive correlation exists between the psychological well-being and empathy across the Indian designers. Most of the research showed in earlier studies were mainly concentrated on practitioners, nurses, social workers, designers, and health care professionals. Hence this current research aims on the primary school teachers who are generally pretended to be more empathetic. Objectives of this research are given below

- To determine empathy of primary school teachers.
- To determine psychological well-being primary school teachers.
- To build the correlation between psychological well-being and empathy and of primary school teachers.
- To build the correlation between age and empathy of primary school teachers.

### 3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was descriptive type; survey research was used.

#### 3.1. Sample selection:

50 was the sample size chosen in this study is 50 and were from various states in India working in either private and government schools.

**3.2. Collection of data:** This involves personal data schedule.

#### 3.3. Tools:

1. Warwick- Edinberg Mental Well-being Scale.
2. Empathy Questionnaire

##### 3.3.1. Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (TEQ).

This Questionnaire has 16-item that assesses an individual's ability to understand the feelings of others, communicate successfully on an emotional level, and motivate pro-social behaviour. TEQ states that empathy was primarily an affective procedure. In three trials, TEQ demonstrated good convergent validity; it correlated well with behavioural measures for social decoding, negatively with an indicator of autistic symptomatology favourably with self-reports of measurements of empathy. This scale also showed excellent internal consistency and significant test-retest repeatability. The TEQ is a rapid, reliable, and valid instrument for assessing empathy.

##### 3.3.2. Warwick- Edinberg Mental Well-being Scale (WENWBS)

WENWBS were tutored to measure psychological wellbeing of general population to evaluate initiatives, programmes, and policies targeted at improving mental health. The 14-item WEMWBS scale consists of five response categories that add up to a single score. The scale has been widely used both domestically and internationally for research on the variables influencing mental health as well as for project and programme monitoring, evaluation, and assessment. Scoring the 14-item WEMWBS scale is not too difficult. The total score is calculated by adding the scores for each of the 14 items.

- 41-44 score indicates mild depression
- <41 is score indicates clinical depression.

#### 3.4. Individuals data:

Individuals data was set which has socio-demographic data of subjects like gender, education and age.

#### 3.5. Hypothesis of the present study.

- There is notable correlation exists between psychological well-being and empathy across the primary school teachers.
- There is notable correlation exists between age and empathy of the primary school teachers.

#### 3.6. Operational definitions.

- **Primary School teachers:** Refers to the teachers teaching from the classes I to V working with or Private/ Semi-Government/Government schools.
- **Empathy:** It is the capacity to recognise, comprehend, also experience another individuals's

feelings, emotions as one's own is known as empathy.

- **Psychological well-being:** Refers to the decisions and assessments that a person makes in an effort to raise their standard of living.

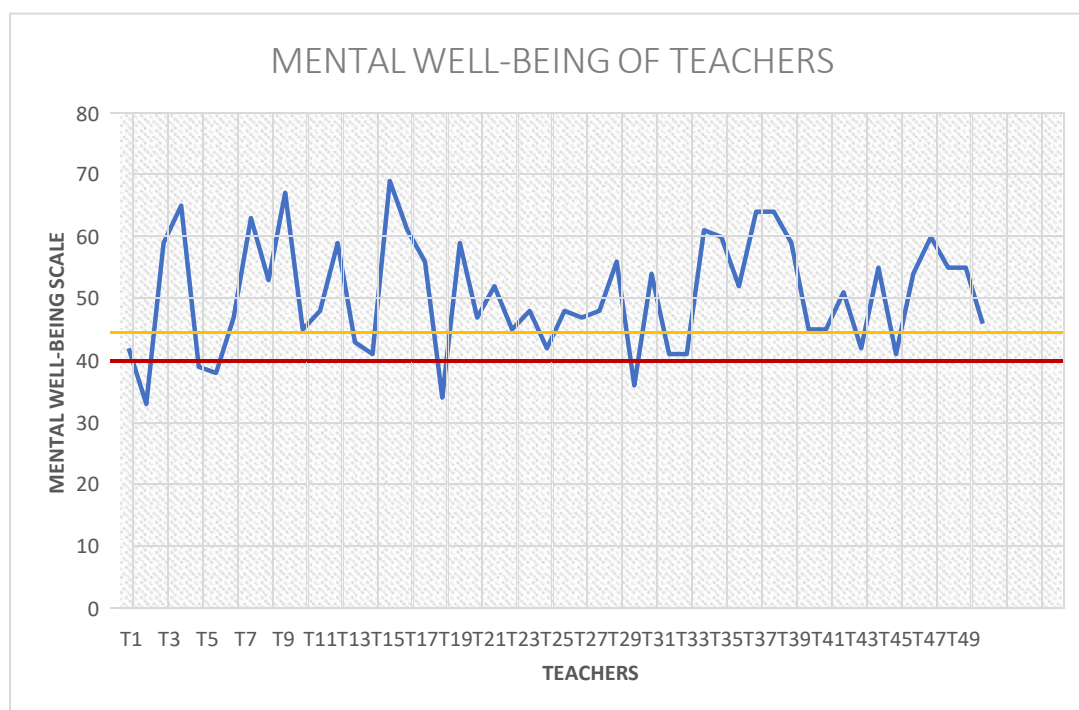
### 3.7. Statistical analysis.

In this study, the mean and standard deviation were employed as statistical methods. Kendal's tau, Spearman's Correlation, and Pearman's Correlation Coefficients were used to analyse the relationship between the variable's empathy and well-being. All of the data analysis in this study was done using SPSS software.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Scores on psychological well-being and empathy of primary school teachers are represented in the Table.1 also in Fig.1 and Fig.2. Horizontal straight lines of Fig.1. represents ranges for mild depression i.e., 41-44, below these lines scores which are less than 40 shows high chances of clinical depression.

Horizontal lines as in Fig.2. represents the mean upper and lower limits on empathy scale. Above the top line represents greater empathies levels (greater than 47). Below bottom line represents the lower empathies levels (less than 44).

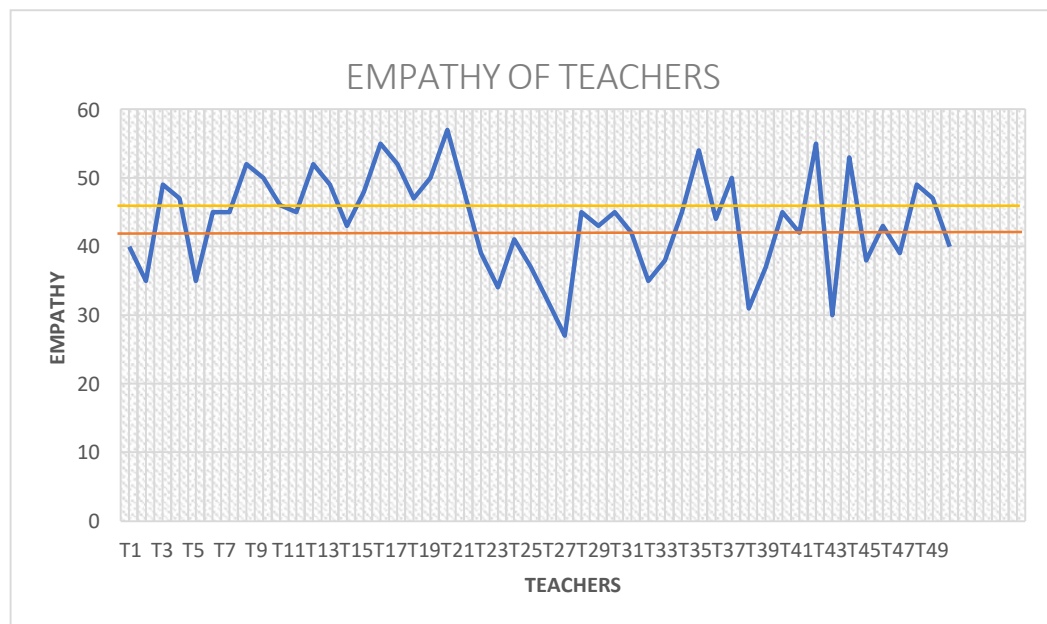


**Fig.1. Psychological well-being scores of primary school teachers.**

From the Table.1, and Fig.1 it may be noted 7 (14%) of the primary school teachers have mild depression also 3 (6%) of primary school teachers are with high risk - clinical depression.

**Table.1. Psychological well-being and Empathy scores of Primary school teachers.**

Code	Age	Gender	Education	Scores on Psychological well-being	Scores on Empathy
T1	41	F	UG	42	40
T2	38	F	PG	33	35
T3	41	F	UG	59	49
T4	48	F	PG	65	47
T5	32	F	PG	39	35
T6	45	F	UG	38	45
T7	36	F	PG	47	45
T8	47	F	UG	63	52
T9	35	F	PG	53	50
T10	50	F	PG	67	46
T11	40	F	PG	45	45
T12	53	F	PG	48	52
T13	53	F	UG	59	49
T14	44	F	UG	43	43
T15	40	F	PG	41	48
T16	51	F	UG	69	55
T17	39	F	PG	61	52
T18	42	F	UG	56	47
T19	43	F	PG	34	50
T20	42	F	UG	59	57
T21	50	F	UG	47	48
T22	55	F	UG	52	39
T23	51	F	UG	45	34
T24	47	F	UG	48	41
T25	41	F	PG	42	37
T26	40	F	UG	48	32
T27	40	F	UG	47	27
T28	47	F	PG	48	45
T29	28	F	PG	56	43
T30	32	F	UG	36	45
T31	32	F	UG	54	42
T32	40	F	PG	41	35
T33	31	F	PG	41	38
T34	46	F	UG	61	45
T35	40	F	PG	60	54
T36	25	F	UG	52	44
T37	45	F	PG	64	50
T38	47	F	PG	64	31
T39	31	F	PG	59	37
T40	39	F	PG	45	45
T41	41	F	PG	45	42
T42	37	F	UG	51	55
T43	39	F	PG	42	30
T44	47	F	UG	55	53
T45	48	F	UG	41	38
T46	26	F	UG	54	43
T47	55	F	UG	60	39
T48	31	F	PG	55	49
T49	33	F	UG	55	47
T50	52	F	UG	46	40



**Fig.2. Empathy scores of primary school teachers.**

From the Table.1, and Fig.2 it may be observed that less than the smallest level of mean empathy value was 19 (38%) and more than the greatest level of average value was 15 (30%). Lowest levels of empathies of less than 35 is 8 (18%) and greatest levels of empathies larger than 50 was 8 (18%).

#### **4.1. First Hypothesis.**

**Notable correlation exists between psychological health and empathy across the primary school teachers.**

In order to verify this hypothesis all correlational coefficients, Kendall's tau, Spearman correlation, also Pearson correlation, were obtained using SPSS are shown in the Tables 2.

**Table.2. Three correlation coefficients of psychological well-being and empathy across the primary school teachers.**

Correlation coefficient	Correlation coefficient value	Significance (2-tailed)
Kendall's tau	0.315**	0.013
Spearman	0.441**	0.001
Pearson	0.411**	0.003

\*\* Correlation is significant at 0.01 level.

It is obvious from the Table 2. that there has strong positive link between psychological well-being and empathy across all correlational coefficients. Positive association between psychological well-being and empathy suggests that psychological health improves with increased empathy. This could be as a result of the fulfilment that comes from having a correct understanding of society's members. The literature for the following professions reported a similar positive correlation exists between psychological well-being and empathy: medical residents [21], who demonstrated greater empathy by paying more attention to their patients' experiences, and nurses [8], who found significantly higher mean empathy values in the subject groups of greater well-being [22]. Research on the subject indicates that

psychological distress is associated with a decrease in empathy [23]. Similar associations with these variables are also seen in the case of teachers T 2 (35,33) and T 5 (35,39) in the current study.

It was also noted that there were rather opposing situations of lower empathy with higher psychological health T47 (39,60) also great empathy with low psychological health T20 (50, 34). This indicates that while those who care excessively about other people have poor mental health, those who will not care about others have sound mental health. However, just one or two examples of this were noted. As such, this cannot be applied generally. The study's findings make it challenging to determine the trade-off between empathic values and psychological well-being. This perspective can be the subject of future research.

There are some incidents where the primary school teachers are showing lower empathy and leading to the serious injuries or even death of the students (ref. the article by Sangamesh. Meenasinakal in the front page of Times of India, dated 20<sup>th</sup> December 2022, where a student of class 4 of Gadag District of Karnataka died).

Another incidence (ref. the article by Express News, dated 16<sup>th</sup> December 2022, a Class 5 girl is being attacked with the scissors, chopping her hair and throwing off the first floor of the classroom of her school in Delhi's central district was treated for injuries and she is out of danger now). Number of years of work, lack of time, monotony in the work, stressful experiences, fewer contacts with the other professionals may causing these professionals difficult to interact empathetically and thus empathy declines and burn out increases. Similar results were reported in the literature in the nursing profession [15,23].

It is necessary to investigate whether or not one's psychological suffering is contributing to a decline in one's empathy levels, which in turn is producing these kinds of instances. It is necessary to investigate which is the source and which is the effect—psychological discomfort producing low empathy or low empathy producing psychological distress.

#### **4.2. Second Hypothesis.**

**Notable correlation exists age with empathy across the primary school teachers.**

In order to verify this hypothesis all correlational coefficients, Kendall's tau, Spearman correlation, also Pearson correlation, were acquired using SPSS shown in Tables 3.

**Table.3. Three correlation coefficients of age and empathy across the primary school teachers.**

<b>Correlation coefficient</b>	<b>Correlation coefficient value</b>	<b>Significance (2-tailed)</b>
Kendall's tau	0.089	0.377
Spearman	0.125	0.386
Pearson	0.090	0.532

From the Table.3. it may be observed that all three correlational coefficients have not shown any significant correlations among age and empathy across primary school teachers. May be experience of the teachers in the teaching field instead of age may have correlation with the empathy may be explored in the future

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Considering the goals stated for the current study, the information was gathered using appropriate instruments. Several factors were identified through the analysis of the data using the SPSS tool, and the results were discussed. These more general findings are shown below,

- All the correlational coefficients, Kendal's Tau, Pearson and Spearman correlation coefficient shows a notable positive correlation exists psychological health with empathy of primary school teachers.
- Positive correlation exists between psychological well-being and empathy of primary school teachers shows that greater the values of empathy the better psychological health.
- All the coefficients of correlation, Kendal's Tau, Pearson and Spearman correlation coefficient shows that there in notable correlation exists between age and empathy of the primary school teachers.

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